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From: Blankinship, Doug
Sent: 2017-05-08T12:39:40-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Fwd: Are Industry Interests Behind President Trump's Attack on National Monuments?
Received: 2017-05-08T12:39:47-04:00

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From: **Center for American Progress** <progress@americanprogress.org>
Date: Mon, May 8, 2017 at 11:46 AM
Subject: Are Industry Interests Behind President Trump's Attack on National Monuments?
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Are Industry Interests Behind President Trump's Attack on National Monuments?

By Mary Ellen Kustin

Last month, President Donald Trump signed an executive order that gives wide discretion to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to recommend actions that the president or Congress should take to alter or rescind the protections for the 54 national monuments that presidents have designated or expanded since 1996. Secretary Zinke publicly called out two monuments: The “bookends” of his review will be the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments, both located in Utah. It’s also been widely reported that the Utah congressional delegation was the driving force behind President Trump’s executive order.

The national monument review will be a legal, moral, and political minefield. President Trump’s embrace of the Utah delegation and its pet cause is especially interesting given that most of the delegation’s members were vocal in their opposition to him during the presidential primary. For a president known to keep a list of those who speak ill of him, it is a curious alliance. The Center for American Progress’ analysis suggests that a closer look at the oil, gas, and coal underneath Utah’s national monuments—and the fossil fuel industry’s influence on Trump and the Utah delegation—might help explain this newly formed partnership.

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Yours in Service - Doug

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